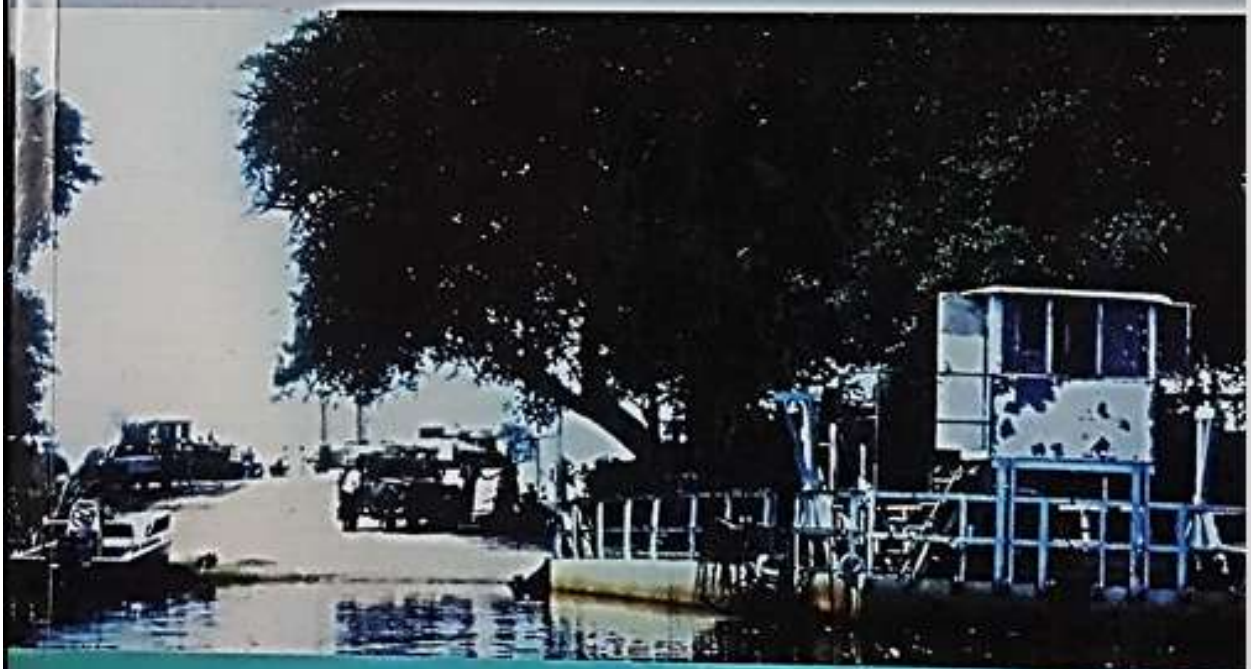
BOTSWANA

Politics and Society



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THE TWENTIETH CENTURY ANTECEDENTS OF DECOLONIZING NATIONALISM IN BOTSWANA BY JEFF RAMSAY

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Introduction

Decolonising nationalism, as expressed through mass-based political parties, only emerged in Botswana from the 1950s. The relatively late formation of nationalist political parties can be largely attributed to two factors that had characterized the Protectorate: a peculiar twentieth-century relationship between nationalist sentiment and support for British overrule, and the survival of traditional Setswana political culture within the colonial context.

During the Protectorate's last decade both of these conditions were altered by a combination of internal and external initiatives. There were, however, significant undercurrents of non-traditional political activity within Botswana dating from the 1920s. after the Second World War, these undercurrents began to surface through local political competition.

Multiracial reformism and the threat of incorporation

The relationship between nationalism and the colonial state in Botswana, as well as the other former High Commission Territories of Lesotho and Swaziland, was for many years fundamentally different from that of most African colonies. At least until the last decade of the colonial era nationalist sentiment was commonly equated with the retention, rather than rejection, of the British occupation. This was because there long existed a consensus among Protectorate Batswana from across the social spectrum that British overrule was preferable to the likely alternative of incorporation into the white minority-dominated states of South Africa and/or Southern Rhodesia. Thus, for many decades, nationalist-minded Batswana were ironically stronger advocates of imperial control than the imperialists themselves. The

restoration of Botswana's independence only became a viable option after the threat of incorporation had receded.

There is probably no single moment from which to date the final failure of the Union of South Africa's bid to incorporate the High Commission Territories. As late as 1963 Hendrick Verwoerd was offering to "become the guardian, the protector or helper of these adjacent Territories, instead of the United Kingdom."(1) The likelihood of such a transfer, however, receded after the 1948 victory of the National Party and its overwhelming re-election in 1953. In this respect, Winston Churchill's April 1954 statement before the House of Commons warning the South African government against "needlessly" bringing up the incorporation issue has been seen as a symbolic turning point. (2)

The alternative spectre of domination by Rhodesian settlerdom was revived by the August 1953 formation of the Central African Federation between Nyasaland, Southern, and Northern Rhodesia. A year earlier, in July 1952 the nascent Federation's dominant politician, Roy Wellensky, had opened the door to the Protectorate's inclusion. (3) This invitation was initially attractive to leading chiefs and a number of white members of the Protectorate's Joint Advisory Council (JAC).

Established in 1950 as a toothless talk shop, the JAC was composed of eight members of the royalist African Advisory Council (AAC), eight members of the European Advisory Council (EAC), and eight colonial officials. During its decade of existence, the JAC evolved into an effective forum for reaching a consensus between the local whites and the traditional indigenous ruling class. It thus became a working model of the elitist multiracial politics that the British hoped, in vain, would emerge out of the alchemy of the Federation.

Multiracial elitism in the Protectorate was facilitated by the fact that its white community was much smaller and economically less predominant than that of the Rhodesias or South Africa, while the chiefs were in a relatively stronger position than most of their cross-border peers. Both wings of the JAC appreciated the prospect of entrenching their privileged local position as partners within a wider Federal oligarchy. More particularly for the chiefs, the Federation was attractive as a potential shield against rising pressure for greater democracy within their reserves, as well as the threat of being reduced to the status of pawns in the building of grand apartheid. The latter

possibility was explicitly outlined in the 1956 Tomlinson Report, which included the High Commission Territories in its blueprint for South Africa's Homelands policy.

Contacts between chiefs and Federation politicians had begun by June 1953 when Wellensky held informal discussions with Kgosi Kgari Sechele II, while the two were returning by plane together from Queen Elizabeth II's coronation. (4) Subsequently, in January 1954 letter to Louis Glover, the EAC's then leading white liberal, Kgosi (Chief) Bathoen II, Chairman of the AAC, noted: "There is no doubt you and I and in fact, most of the Chiefs are in favour of Federation" adding "But how can we make this known to the Federation government?"(5)

Further encouraged by Tshekedi Khama, Glover took up the matter with Welensky, the Protectorate Government, and other white politicians in the territory. The latter were lukewarm in their support; some privately preferring ties with South Africa. More critical was the opposition of the Resident Commissioner, Martin Wray, who in a November 1955 meeting with Glover warned that agitation to join the Federation would, in the British view, incite unwelcome counterclaims by South Africa. (6) The same concerns combined with growing internal black opposition also encouraged caution on the part of Wilensky.

Despite the humiliating circumstances surrounding his fall from regency in 1949, Tshekedi remained until his 1959 death as one of the Protectorate's leading political personalities. All along he recognized the inadequacy of the Federation's qualified African representation. Like many, he initially hoped for an evolution toward a more balanced interracial partnership. In this context, he tied the possibility of joining the Federation with political reform in the Protectorate, more particularly the JAC's replacement by a multiracial Legislative Council (Legco). In 1952-53 Tshekedi, along with Bathoen and Glover, spearheaded calls for Legco in both the AAC and EAC. But, before 1958, the British consistently blocked the proposal. In their rejection, the colonial authorities cited Legco's supposed costs, a desire to proceed first with the creation of local Tribal Councils, and divided opinions within the EAC. (7) Underlying this was London's continuing desire to appease Pretoria.

As a way of circumventing opposition to Legco, while promoting inter-*merafe* or tribal/polity unity, in 1954 Tshekedi joined other leading royalists in

advocating the formation of a Federated African Authority (FAA), in which Kgari would take formal precedence as "king". (8) Despite this concession the FAA idea ultimately failed to win the support of Kgari and his Bakgatla colleague, Molefi, as well as the British. Royal federalism during this era was also reflected in Bathoen's unsuccessful attempt to introduce a common flag incorporating the totems (*sereto*) of the officially gazetted tribes, as well as the establishment of September 30th as Protectorate Day. (9)

While leading chiefs were attracted to aspects of the Central African Federation's reformist multiracialism, others among the small intelligentsia of educated non-royals appreciated that its institutional structures entrenched white minority domination. After the Second World War members of this group were also becoming increasingly critical of royal autocracy. As they observed the acceleration of political change elsewhere on the continent the idea of a separate identity as a self-governing Protectorate emerged as a realistic alternative. At his inaugural sitting on the JAC, in April 1958, ex-royal Seretse Khama articulated this view, stating:

“I think it is time that we ourselves in Bechuanaland, who neither belong to the Union of South Africa nor the Federation, or any other part as far as I can see, except Great Britain, should try to formulate a policy of our own which is probably unique to us. And that is a policy, perhaps, of even teaching those countries who profess to be more advanced than ourselves, that in as far as administration and race relationships [are concerned] they have more to learn from us than we from them.

“I must say, quite frankly that I have been rather disturbed.... to find that on the whole there is a tendency to look always over our shoulders. Perhaps I am wrong, if so, I stand corrected. We want to see what is happening elsewhere instead of getting on with what we know is peculiar to us and to the country itself. We should get on and have no fear that we may incur someone's displeasure, as long as what we do is internationally accepted...And if we are right, I am afraid emotion must come into this; we should not bother very much with what anyone might say...We have ample opportunity in this country to teach people how human beings can live together.”(10)

During the same JAC session, the British government finally accepted the principal of a local Legco, which by then enjoyed the unanimous support of

the white as well as black members of the JAC. Thereafter, interest in the increasingly unstable Federation faded.

While the spectre of domination by neighbouring white minority regimes long dissuaded popular mobilization against British overrule, over the years it also encouraged many Batswana to involve themselves to varying degrees in political movements within South Africa and, to a lesser extent, the Central African territories. Some of these individuals, Motsamai Mpho being the most notable example, would later use the lessons they learned across the border to play prominent roles in organizing parties within Botswana.

The survival of chieftaincies

An equally important factor that stifled the early emergence of political parties was the degree to which traditional Setswana political culture continued to exist as a dynamic focus for local initiatives, as well as an effective instrument of imperial control. Responding to official post-World War I concern about the spread of anti-colonial movements such as Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) into British Africa one Resident Commissioner, James MacGregor, noted March 1923:

"There is no evidence of the existence, let alone progress, of Pan-Africanism in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, and I do not expect that there will be any as long as the tribal system is maintained."(11)

Indeed, as late as August 1961 American Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Mennen "Soapy" Williams, reporting on his tour of the High Commission Territories, observed:

"Bechuanaland is the poorest of the three areas visited and shows the least evidence of political evolution... In general, people interested only in cattle and chiefs show little desire for the development of political pattern. As one tribal chief put it, 'We are not worried about the slow pace of politics here. Tradition is important and the constitution is so framed that we do not get too far from tribal patterns.' In conclusion [the] British probably correct [the] possibility of [the] development of Bechuanaland at [a] slow pace."(12)

At least until the 1950s chieftainship, or *bogosi*, operated within the consensual ideals of the *makgotla* (here understood as both a locus of participatory decision-making and a framework for the legitimisation of royal

authority) and through the agency of *mephato* or age regiments, continued to be the primary context for political competition. Much like the medieval monarchs of Europe, colonial-era chiefs often sought to strengthen their position from below by playing off the rival interests of *dikgosana* (royal relatives and others of higher social standing) against commoners, those labelled as *bafaladi* (or *baagedi*- outsiders/immigrants) and the *meretswane* (junior or subordinate communities) within their *morafe* (Setswana polity, in colonial parlance "tribe"). Outside of the royal family, where the *Mmakgosi* (Queen-mother) in particular enjoyed special prerogatives, women were generally excluded from politics. Completely excluded were the *malata* (hereditary servants/serfs/slaves).

Contradictions within Tswana social hierarchy tended to come into the open when the authority of a particular chief was challenged. The troubles that plagued the reign of Bakwena Kgosi Sebele II are an example. In the aftermath of a November 1929 colonial inquiry as to whether power should be transferred from the Kgosi to a "Tribal Council" the Resident Commissioner, Rowland Daniel, reported:

"I attended a full kgotla meeting at Molepolole on the 18th and 19th of November to discuss the matter and found there were at least two-thirds of the tribe who were opposed to the petition. The position was much the same as I found it a year ago, the greater number of headmen were in favour of the petition whilst the majority consisted of common people and a few headmen."(13)

Ignored by Daniel during the same meeting was an alternative proposal that an elected council of commoners be created to assist the Kgosi. Before the 1950s such open agitation for the creation of new political institutions was confined to a handful of, generally educated, Batswana, many of whom were resident part-time in South Africa. While the importance of these reformers should not be exaggerated their existence did not go unnoticed. A journalist who toured the Protectorate in 1931, Leonard Barns, observed:

"I found among the more intelligent men an unexpected interest in the course of English political history, in the passage of power from crown to aristocracy, from aristocracy to the bourgeois, from the bourgeois to the proletariat; and they were frankly speculating about the possibility of tribal development following comparable lines."(14)

Simon Ratshosa, one of the young Motswana intellectuals with whom Barns was in contact, has been characterized as a progenitor of later bourgeois nationalism. (15) While imprisoned for his attempted regicide of Tshekedi, he drafted an unpublished manuscript entitled "My Book on Bechuanaland Protectorate Native Custom". In it, he appealed for colonial, rather than popular, intervention to curb the despotism of chiefs and abolish feudal customs that were a barrier to "native progress and economic freedom". He furthermore called for the appointment of a National Council that would advise the Resident Commissioner on law-making, serve as a customary court of appeal, and be empowered to discipline "disobedient chiefs". Although this document was read with some interest by a handful of British officials, few Batswana were ever aware, much less supportive, of its contents.

A closer look at Simon Ratshosa's career reveals that his role as an early critic of the colonial status quo was inconsistent and opportunistic. Like such contemporaries as Moanaphuti Segolodi and the young Leetile Raditladi, his criticism of royal autocracy remained narrowly focused on his own highly personalized conflict with Tshekedi. For example, it was only after Tshekedi had freed Simon's own *malata* that he attempted to embarrass his nemesis by helping draw modest international attention to the existence of *bolata* (slavery) within Gammangwato.

There were other early voices. At the inaugural 1921 session of the Native Advisory Council (NAC), the Resident Commissioner dismissed *Motswareledi-Kgosi* (Regent) Isang Pilane's call for the body to be invested with genuine legislative powers. (16) By 1931 Drs. Silas and Sebophiwa Molema were able to present themselves before the NAC as the popular choices of the Barolong booRatshidi lekgotla. (17) But, their appeal to both the imperialists and chiefs to adopt this supposedly democratic practice elsewhere fell on deaf ears, as did their further calls for the creation of a two-chamber council divided between Chiefs and commoners.

For their part, the British long remained content with the system of indirect rule established by the territory's first twentieth-century Resident Commissioner, Ralph Williams (1901-06), which enabled what were never more than a few hundred white officials to maintain peace and collect revenue. Such administrative reforms as were implemented before 1960, most notably during the administrations of Charles Rey (1930-37) and Charles Arden-Clark (1937-42), did not alter William's basic monarchical

concept that the British Crown had ultimate authority over Protectorate chiefs, who were expected to exercise the same authority over their people. From this premise, most colonial officials followed Williams' assumption that the absolute authority of those chiefs who were officially recognized, as "chiefs" should be absolutely upheld so long as they maintained order, collected Hut Tax, and were otherwise reasonably cooperative. Addressing a lekgotla in 1901, Williams stated:

“When the Government thinks that a chief is unfit to rule his people the Government will remove him, and say who shall be chief, but it is not for you to say. There is a Proclamation which provides that persons disturbing the peace of the country may be removed from it, the High Commissioner will not hesitate to enforce it upon you if he thinks it appropriate.”(18)

British and popular Batswana views of chieftainship thus differed. To his people, a chief remained at the apex of a participatory political structure that was ideally manifested in the right of all adult male non-*malata* to take part in public discussions. Chiefs, however, sat at the bottom of a colonial hierarchy that functioned through a military-like chain of command. As Fred Morton has observed:

"If a Kgosi spoke for the people against the wishes of the government, the Kgosi was asking for trouble. Likewise, if the Kgosi acted against the people even with Government support, the Kgosi was likely to encounter resistance. The only difference was that, for many years, diKgosi could survive against opposition from their own people but not from Government."(19)

While the relationship between chiefs, their subjects, and the British over the decades was more complex in practice than may be implied from the above passage, in the long term the contradictions inherent in the chief’s intermediary position undermined chieftaincy. As chiefs, they were ultimately the agents of a foreign regime whose major material interest was the underdevelopment of Botswana as a source of super-exploited migrant labour. Official recognition of this process is reflected in a July 1916 minute opposing new taxation proposals by the Protectorate's Financial Secretary, Eason, who noted:

"I am not sure also that we are not gradually putting the territory into an economically unsound position by seeing interest and I believe capital go out

of the country and laying no foundations for new trades nor the betterment of existing ones."(20)

Externally based movements in the Protectorate before 1950

The broader implications of the Protectorate's status as a labour reserve was also recognized at an early date by Marxist intellectuals, including members of the Communist Party of South Africa. In March 1919, at the inaugural congress of Comintern in Moscow, David Ivon Jones, in his address on "Communism in South Africa", described Bechuanaland as an area where local government was "exercised by chiefs, petty chiefs, and headman, always of course under the supervision of the police patrol." Turning to the regional macro-economy he added:

"This, then, is the function of the native territories, to serve as cheap breeding grounds for black labour- sucking it in or letting it out according to the demands of industry. By these means territories' Capital is relieved of the obligation of paying wages to cover the cost of the labourer of reproducing his kind."(21)

After much debate, the Party reached an ideological turning point in 1928 with the adoption of its program for "an independent native South African republic as a stage towards a workers' and peasants' republic, with full and equal rights for all races black, coloured and white" in which it explicitly recognized that "South Africa is a black country, the majority of its population is black and so is the majority of the workers and peasants... The black peasantry constitutes the basic moving force of the revolution in alliance with and under the leadership of the working class."(22)

Consistent with their ideological stance, from the 1920s the South African Communists made intermittent efforts to recruit Batswana migrant labourers, as well as those from the other rural reserves. Some Protectorate Batswana attended party meetings and night schools. There was also a modest effort to propagandise within the Protectorate through the underground distribution of the party's newspapers *Umsebenzi/South African Worker* and, later, *Inkululeko*. (23) Both periodicals regularly carried articles in Setswana and Sesotho as well as English and other regional languages.

A number of provocative articles about Botswana appeared in *Umsebenzi* by a certain L.L. Leepile. In a groundbreaking July 1926 feature "What the

Ratshosas' Murder Trial did not reveal" Leepile described Gammangwato as being headed by a "ruling oligarchy" that "live in idleness whilst the mass of people remain in dreadful poverty."(24) He also wrote of "the slavery of the Masarwa", while further noting that "several tribes, notably the Abirwa, struggled incessantly for freedom, but were always ruthlessly suppressed." In the early 1930s, in the context of its stand against the banishment of Sebele II and the temporary suspension of Tshekedi (for the flogging of Phineas McIntosh), the *Umsebenzi* called for an independent republic of "Botsoana", which would take control of the railway, abolish debts to white traders, and establish elected tribal councils."

In the end, little appears to have come from Communist efforts. Chiefs such as Tshekedi, as well as colonial officials vigorously suppressed party literature, which at any rate must have been of little relevance to the territory's overwhelmingly illiterate majority. Unlike the *Lekgotla la Bafo* of Lesotho and the Zoutpansberg Balemi Association in the northern Transvaal, there was no local organization in Botswana with which the Communists could ally themselves. Moreover, the Party declined throughout much of the 1930s due to bitter internal discord aggravated by Comintern interventions. After its 1950 banning, the Party's popular identity became intertwined with that of the broader Congress Alliance. While the impact of the Communists on those Batswana who were exposed to their message is worthy of further research, the Party's principal legacy appears to have been its pioneering translation of Marxist-Leninism into Setswana.

If the impact of the Communist Party before the Second World War was modest, that of other externally based movements such as the African National Congress (ANC), the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union ("ICU"- popularly known in Setswana/Sesotho as "*Keabona*" literally "I see you"), and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) was even less. Throughout the 1930s the ANC declined into an ineffectual elite network, which included local Batswana, but remained institutionally inactive within the Protectorate.

During its brief heyday the 1920s the ICU claimed branches in Botswana, whose details remain a mystery. Of probably greater significance were the personal contacts between Gammangwato dissidents, led by Moanaphuti Segolodi, and William Ballinger, the British TUC advisor to the ICU who visited the Protectorate in 1930 and again in 1931. (25) Unsurprisingly Ballinger was interested in the dissidents' issues of "forced" (regimental)

labour and Khoisan slavery. In response to the second visit 225 Bangwato headmen, at Tshekedi's behest, signed a petition requesting that the British bar Ballinger, along with the ICU's leader Clements Kedalie, from their territory. (26)

Notwithstanding Macgregor's dismissal of its prospects, the UNIA is known to have gained a transitory foothold in the Kgalagadi, particularly among Ovaherero of Botswana, as well as Namibia. In August 1922 the Gobabis Magistrate reported to his Ghanzi counterpart:

"At present, there is also some form of agitation going on among the Hereros, and some Bechuanas. On one or two occasions these agitators have crossed over from Bechuanaland... They wear rosettes of red, blue, and green at their native meetings, and have been explaining how war should be made against the Europeans."(27)

The following month Bechuanaland police also began to collect evidence of “a certain native” who had travelled throughout western Botswana spreading “seditious talk.”(28) In April 1923 Macgregor was informed that "Samuel Sheppard is the native who travelled from Maun to Ghanzi, held meetings at Kalkfontien, then proceeded to Lehututu and towards the Upington District, eventually reaching Winhuk after months of travel."(29)

An educated Omuherero resident of Ngamiland, Samuel Karcho Sheppard was an established agitator of Ovaherero rights on both sides of the border. Within the Protectorate, Ovaherero resentment was focused on their subordinate position under the Batawana. The Maun Resident Magistrate, while noting that the UNIA message had also spread to some Wayeyi and Basarwa (Khoisan), noted that: "The Damara [Ovaherero] have no country of their own and therefore Bolshevic propaganda appeals to them."(30)

Concern about UNIA activities in the Protectorate, however, faded as the movement burned itself out. From the limited evidence, it appears that the organization was more messianic than strategic in its conception. The UNIA had a more lasting ideological legacy in South Africa where, in 1924, it joined with the ICU, predominately Coloured African Peoples Organization, Cape Indian Council, and elements of the ANC to form the Non-European Congress, a notable forerunner of later black consciousness movements.

In addition to joining organizations like the ANC and ICU by the 1940s Batswana migrant workers had begun to form their own extraterritorial societies. Most confined themselves to such practical purposes as raising money for local projects and arranging the home burial of members. By the 1950s, however, Batswana in South Africa had formed a movement known as the "Sons of Bechuanaland", while a "Bechuanaland Cultural Club" existed in Southern Rhodesia. (31) Unfortunately, little information currently exists on either of these organizations and their possible contribution toward the formation of a wider "Bechuanaland" consciousness among migrants.

Regional politics and the decline of chieftainship

The decline of chieftainship had become general by 1960, but the chronology of its demise within the Tribal Reserves varied. The process was greatly accelerated in those areas where the British deposed incumbent rulers. While the colonial regime was able to banish such figures as Sekgoma Letsholathebe (1906) Sebele II (1931) Molefi (1936) and Seretse along with his uncle Tshekedi (1950), with relative ease, they thereafter found it impossible to confer the deposed monarch's legitimacy upon their chosen successors. The same held true for ungazetted local rulers, such as the Bakgatla bagaMmanaana Kgosi Gobuamang and the Bakalanga bakaNswazwi She John Madawu Nswazwi VIII. In the absence of legitimate local monarchs, monarchical legitimacy itself was compromised.

Besides undermining chieftaincy in each case, the colonial deposition of uncooperative chiefs gave rise to organized movements seeking their restoration. In Ngamiland between 1906 and 1912, the detention of "BagaSekgoma" faction leaders and the disarmament of their supporters failed to break a spirit of resistance that was only accommodated when about half of the reserve's population was allowed to join Sekgoma Letsholathebe in exile along the Chobe. Most returned to Ngamiland following Sekgoma’s death in 1914.

During the 1930s supporters of Sebele II in Kweneng drew up mass petitions, enlisted the support of neighbouring polities, and engaged in various acts of non-cooperation, including the non-payment of Hut Tax. (32) In Johannesburg, Bakwena migrant workers formed their own committee under the leadership of later Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) patriarch Sankoloba Matlabaphiri, which raised funds for a legal challenge to the authority of the colonial state along the lines of the Sekgoma's earlier appeal.

In the end, the legality of Sebele II's deposition was upheld in the 1936 judgment in the case Tshekedi Khama and Bathoen II versus the High Commissioner, which reconfirmed the latter's ultimate authority. (33) Yet, the "BagaSebele" movement was only fully eclipsed in the wake of the exiled monarch's death in 1939. Indeed, just six months before Sebele's death, the Molepolole district commissioner had reported:

"He [Kgari] has no personal prestige and very little authority. His tribe do not regard him as the rightful Chief but knowing that he has the backing of the Government they do not openly defy him. They show their lack of respect by passive resistance, e.g., by failing to satisfy his judgements. (34)

Among the BagaMmanaana of Gangwaketse and BakaNswazwi of Gammangwato's Bukalanga periphery militant organized support for Gobuamang and Nswazwi VIII was ultimately crushed by military force. (35) Gobuamang's supporters were partially accommodated by their 1935-36 resettlement at Thamaga, while old Nswazwi village was razed in September 1947, resulting in the flight of most of its population into Southern Rhodesia.

The 1936 suspension of Molefi gave rise to what was arguably Botswana's first political party- *"Lekgotla la Ipelegeng"*. (36) Formed by commoners Ralefela Motsisi and Kgosi Lebotse, but enjoying the patronage of the MmaKgosi Seingwaeng, *Ipelegeng* took its name from Molefi's farewell appeal to his supporters to "help themselves" in his absence. Like the BagaSekgoma and BagaSebele, its tactics were initially confined to petitioning, raising money for lawyers, and acts of non-cooperation. Declared an illegal organization in 1938 it re-emerged among Bakgatla servicemen during the Second World War as *Ipelegeng II.*

With Molefi's post-war restoration *Ipelegeng II* attempted to devote itself to community development projects, but the Kgosi sabotaged these efforts, himself. In the 1960s many of its surviving members were prominent in a new Kgatleng movement for commoner empowerment, *"Mphetsebe*" ("lend me your ear"). (37) This organization's immediate objective was to make Linchwe II's progressive sister Tshire regent, in place of his conservative uncle Mmusi and his *dikgosana* advisors. Instead, their agitation resulted in Linchwe's own early installation. Thereafter, with Linchwe's alleged encouragement, leading Mphetsebe and ex-*Ipelegeng* members led by Defatlhwe Seame and Madisa Moremi, along with Tshire, embraced the BPP.

In Gammangwato the banishment of Seretse in 1950 also gave rise to institutionalised opposition that later fed into the rise of national political parties. (38) There members of Seretse's own *Malekantwa* ("those who try the war"), including such figures as Lenyeletse Seretse, Moutlakgola Nwako, Goareng Mosinyi, and Kenneth Koma, were especially tenacious in their opposition. In June 1952, following the "Serowe kgotla riot", the *Malekantwa* activists supported Leetile Raditladi's attempt to form a Bamangwato National Congress (BNC), which also incorporated such established figures as Kgalemang Motsete and Monametse Chiepe. (39) Opposed to Seretse's more traditionalist royal supporters led by Keaboka Kgamane as well as the pro-Tshekedi *dikgosana* of the "BagaRametsana" faction, BNC members vaguely stood for democratic reform, as well as Seretse's restoration. In their first months, they nominated Seretse's half-sister Oratile Ratshosa, the widow of Simon and a veteran opponent of Tshekedi in her own right, as regent. (40) But this was rejected by the British who in May 1953 imposed BagaRamaetsana member Rasebolai Kgamane. Never a mass movement the BNC thereafter faded into no more than an occasional label for a loose network of Bangwato reformists.

British intervention certainly accelerated the erosion of chieftainship in many areas, while giving rise to new forms of organized protest politics, the institution's decline was ultimately due to its failure to reconcile itself with growing demands for equal treatment by members of subordinate communities, such as the Bakalanga, Wayeyi, Babirwa, Ovaherero and BagaMmanaana, new religious movements, teachers and other indigenous civil servants, and perhaps most critically the emerging network of educated local notables who by 1960 had begun to constitute an aspirant national bourgeois.

By the mid-fifties, the growing challenge to the status quo was beginning to cause serious concern among some officials. In a secrete September 1957 memo the Commissioner of Police noted that there would henceforth be:

“...a greater concentration by Special branch on Security Intelligence; e.g., subversive activities inimical to Government such as Pan-Africanism and Nationalism, pseudo-religious activities, trade Unionism and subversion of Labour, contacts with Nationalistic or Communistic influences or organizations outside the territory, which are a Security problem. This problem may not be very self-evident at present, but with economic

development and the growth of education it will undoubtedly become more apparent in the future.”(41)

The Commissioner's memo went on to outline a restructuring of the Special Branch within the Criminal Investigation Department (C.I.D.) to facilitate political surveillance. A year earlier a confidential study by the then Divisional Commissioner South, Jean Germond, had already concluded that the institution of Chieftainship was only functioning effectively in Gangwaketse, where Bathoen II was described as an "industrious bureaucrat" who although allegedly "unpopular because there is nothing generous in his nature" was nonetheless "respected and feared and his word is the law."(42)

Germond's rather personalized analysis of royal decline was shared by several other old hands in the administration, who proposed such measures as special education for royal heirs and a strengthening of the traditional councils of royal uncles and senior advisors. In this, they were fighting what they perceived as a "new line" coming from the top in favour of promoting partially elected Tribal Councils to govern beside the chiefs. This new line was motivated at least in part by an official appreciation that the chiefly monopoly of power was becoming increasingly untenable.

Even in Bathoen's Gangwaketse, absolute monarchy was being openly challenged. There, as elsewhere, there was a rapid growth of independent religious movements such as the Zionist Christian Church (ZCC), Apostolic Faith Mission, and Jehovah's Witnesses despite heavy-handed persecution. In 1958 Bathoen, with government support, ordered the Zionists to resettle at remote Metlobo. (43) Thereafter Metlobo, along with the BagaMmanaana settlement Moshupa remained a centre of anti-Bathoen sentiment (which from 1969 made them BDP strongholds). A smaller, but ultimately more powerful, group of opponents emerged within Kanye among young educated commoners, many of who had been initiated by Bathoen in 1947 as the “*Maganamokgwa”* (“those who refuse tradition”) regiment. Prominent among the *Maganamokwa* was Quett Ketumile Masire, who had a series of clashes with Bathoen throughout the 1950s over such issues as his advocacy of the fencing of communal land and criticism of royal marketing cartels for local agricultural produce. (44)

An educator turned Master Farmer and part-time journalist; Masire was an archetype of the educated, petty bourgeois, "new men" who throughout the Protectorate were increasingly dissatisfied with the economic and political

constraints of chieftainship to the advancement of both themselves and their communities. To this end, they generally came to favour the creation of a strong central government that would remove racial barriers to their advancement, protect private property and initiative, and be empowered to discipline acquisitive and/or autocratic chiefs. For them Bathoen came to epitomize the latter, his local transport monopoly's buses being painted with "sekalaba", which was alleged to be a warning “do not dare”. Masire recalls:

“We the young people wanted to see Batswana acting like a country at the end of the colonial era, not tribes. This is what caused two colleagues and I to want to start a paper. It was not money or politics. We were reading African Advisory Council minutes and seeing that the Chiefs wanted to be big fish in small ponds.”(45)

In the other Tribal reserves, a similar mix of opposition challenged what remained of the monarchy after the earlier depositions. In Ngamiland the reformist regency of Pulane Moremi (1947-64) was undermined by ethnic separatist movements among the Ovaherero and Wayeyi, as well as a powerful faction of conservative *dikgosana* seeking to defend their feudal privileges. (46) Underlying this ferment was the recent collapse of *bolata*, which up until the 1940s had incorporated substantial numbers of Wayeyi (previously labelled "Makoba" by their masters), as well as Khoisan in the region. In this context Ngamiland's small educated elite became politically split along communal lines with Batawana reformers like Pulane's secretary Tsheko Tsheko (who had replaced Raditladi) ultimately becoming the nucleus of the BDP, while the future founder of the BPP and Botswana Independence Party (BIP), Mpho, supported the cause of the Ovaherero, as well as his fellow Wayeyi. Mpho's impact within the area was, however, limited by the fact that between 1948 and 1960 he was based in South Africa, gaining notoriety as the chairman of the ANC's Roodeport branch, while he spent most of the early 1960s trying to build up a national following from Palapye.

In Kweneng Kgari's attempts to consolidate royal autocracy were challenged after the Second World War by ex-servicemen, persecuted independent church followers, ethnic sub-groups, and educated progressives. (47) Leadership among the latter ultimately fell to two junior royal relatives, Patrick Kgosidintsi and Englishman Kgabo, who by 1962 had become the respective leaders of the BPP and BDP. In this competition, while the BPP was supported by ANC and labour militants, such as Ben Kenosi and Victor

Busang, as well as some of the old BagaSebele, the majority of the local notables, including such older progressives of the pre-war generation as Marthinus Seboni, James Mhiko, and Matlabaphiri, drifted into the Domkrag camp. Of the 64 elected and appointed members of the 1961 Bakwena Tribal Council, by 1965 43 were associated with the BDP with only 4 for the BPP and none with the BIP. (48)

By the time of Kgari's 1962 death, the political parties had already gained the initiative. Thereafter the unsatisfactory resolution of the succession dispute between Sebele II's eldest son, Moruakgomo, and his cousin Bonewamang Padi, in which a colonial Judge naively imposed the illegitimate and incompetent Neale Sechele as a compromise candidate, reduced chieftaincy to political irrelevance. (49) In western Kweneng Bakgalagari grievances during the 1950s became associated with the persecution of the independent Pentecostal movement of Tumelo Puleng, as well as the occasional protests of such figures as Eyes Rekoeng and Babaloogwe Kgosi Gaoonwe Seloilwe. (50) In 1965 the sub-region fell to the BDP by default.

New politics in the Crownlands and Concession areas

In the settler-dominated freehold concession areas of the northeast and southeast, as well as the sparsely inhabited Crownlands of Ghanzi, Chobe, and Kgalagadi, there were no colonially recognized chiefs, only sub-chiefs, and headmen. Royal autocracy was thus not a significant issue. Instead, political agitation focused on white settler domination and discrimination, black landlessness, and intercommunal competition over scarce resources. In Ghanzi the opening of the cattle trek route to the Lobatse abattoir increased economic and political competition between rival white, mostly Afrikaner, and black, predominately Ovaherero, Bakgalagari, and Nama, pastoralists. Khoisan speakers, predominately Naro and Gwi-Khoe, who made up approximately half of the district's population, remained a marginalized underclass. Many worked, at least until the 1950s, as unpaid labourers on settler farms.

For many decades settler interests were articulated through the Ghanzi Cattle and Farmers' Association, which sought to promote white economic and political paramountcy. (51) In addition, petitions were drawn up in 1910, 1920, 1937, and 1954, in which the greater number of settlers unsuccessfully advocated for the complete or partial removal of non-whites from the district, (52) In the latter petition it was noted that:

"…with the upsurge of African nationalism throughout the length and breadth of Africa ranging from the Sudan, the Mau Mau disturbances, and the African disturbances in the Union of South Africa, your petitioners feel they have a claim to hold the Ghanzi District."

Before independence Ghanzi remained a racially repressive backwater. A typical incident occurred in 1958 when the Chairman of the Farmers' Association, Mr. Van Zyl, was convicted of assaulting workers, only to dismiss those who had given evidence against him at the trial. (53) Like western Kweneng, the BDP captured the Ghanzi and Kgalagadi Districts in the 1965 election by default.

Notwithstanding its relatively modest population, the Chobe sub-district had its own political culture revolving around competition between and among the Veekuhane (Basubiya), Batawana, and Shua-Khoe communities, attempts to organize local timber company workers and resentment at the discriminatory shadow of the Rhodesias. The latter was accompanied by official concern about the presence of alleged Northern Rhodesia African National Congress activists. (54)

The northeast and southeast, including the growing towns of Francistown and Lobatse, in many ways, resembled microcosms of the bordering settler states. After the Second World War, low African wages reinforced by a rigorous colour bar gave rise to organized labour activity. The territory's first trade union, the Francistown African (later Bechuanaland Protectorate) Workers Union (BPWU) was founded in 1949. (55) Subsequently revived by Raditladi in the mid-fifties, with branches in Serowe, led by L. Seretse, and Lobatse, by Victor Busang the BPWU remained more of an elitist talking shop than a true workers movement. Busang, however, managed to organize boycotts of racist business establishments. Joshua Nkomo's Rhodesia Railway Workers Union was also active in the Protectorate. Its organizers included future BPP stalwarts Knight Maripe and Kenneth Nkwa, both of whom were then based in Bulawayo. (56)

In 1954 Raditladi also presided over the Francistown African Cultural Organization as a forum for educated township dwellers. In 1959 this grouping was superseded by the more openly politicised Tatitown Cultural Organization, one of whose leading lights was a store manager, ex-serviceman, and sometimes Pentecostal preacher named Philip Matante.

(57) Having migrated to Johannesburg after the war, Matante had played at most a minor role in ANC activities prior to his 1957 return to the Protectorate. (54) He had thus already left South Africa before the 1959 formation of the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), with which he has often been identified. Before becoming the BPP's most charismatic public speaker, he had also honed his oratory skills as an independent preacher; struggling in vain between February and October 1960 to have his "St. Phillip's Apostolic Church" sanctioned in Gammangwato. (58)

NOTES

1. H.F. Verwoerd, *The Road to Freedom for Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland* Pretoria: Dept of Information Fact Paper no. 107, 1963; also J. Halpern South Africa's Hostages: Basutoland, Bechuanaland, and Swaziland Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965, pp. 432-36. In November 1963 the conservative Afrikaner member of the Legco, Hendrick van Gass had much of Verwoerd's 6 September 1963 statement read into the Bechuanaland Protectorate (BP) Legislative Council (Legco) record, unsuccessfully motioning that Verwoerd be invited to personally present his case: Botswana National Archives (BNA) BP Legco Hansard no.9, November 1963, pp. 109-23.

2. House of Commons *Hansard* vol. 535, 13 April 1954, columns 1961-62.

3. Northern Rhodesia Legco *Hansard* no. 73, 3 July 1952, p. 170. Copy of speech, with margin notes by Tshekedi Khama, in Tshekedi Khama Papers (TKP), file 11, Khama III Memorial Museum (KIIIMM), Serowe.

4. Zimbabwe National Archives (ZNA), Huggins Papers, MS 281/2/PM21: L. Glover to R. Wellensky, 8 January 1954.

5. ZNA, MS 281/2/PM21- Bathoen II to L. Glover 5 January 1954. In November 1953 Bathoen along with Kgari and Mokgosi toured Eastern and Central Africa, the later visit reinforcing their favourable impression of the Federation: BNA S. 536/4 Tergos ("Territories Gossip" reports) November, December 1953; Bathoen had also earlier been impressed with Southern Rhodesia while attended the Rhodes Centenary celebrations, Tergos September 1953. His pro-Federation stance lasted at least through 1958 when he again toured the Rhodesias and was reported to be "favourably impressed by the position of the Africans in the Federation": BNA Office of

the President (OP) SP/N/ 21 High Commissioner, Salisbury to HC (High Commissioner for South Africa & High Commission Territories) 9 December 1958, with an enclosed cutting from Africa Daily News, 21 November 1958.

6. TKP, file 11, KIIIMM, L. Glover to Tshekedi 1, 24 & 27 October 1955, 18 January 1956; Notes by Glover of talk with the Resident Commissioner (RC) at Machaneng, 4 November 1955; Tshekedi to L. Glover 10 October 1955. BNA Div. Comm. North 9/4 Northern Divisional Intelligence Committee Reports (NDIC) and District Intelligence Reports (DIR) contains 22 January 1954 Colonial Office (CO) instruction to discourage Chiefs from petitioning for Federation, and 17 February 1955 assessment that 90% of the whites in the Tuli Block and 50% of the Gaberones and Lobatse Blocks and "most" in Ghanzi favoured incorporation into South Africa, while the Federation was said to have majority support among whites in the Tati (Northeast), as well as reports on white pro-Federation and Union of South Africa activities; also Div. Comm. North 9/8 NDIC.

7. O. Gabasiane & A. Molokomme "The Legislative Council" in F. Morton & J. Ramsay (eds.) *Birth of Botswana, A History of the Bechuanaland Protectorate 1910-66,* Gaborone: Longman 1987, pp. 161-71. BNA African Advisory Council (AAC), European Advisory Council (EAC), and Joint Advisory Council (JAC) minutes on the issue 1952-58 see in particular AAC 32nd session, 1952 and 34 session, 1954; EAC 53rd session, 1953.

8. BNA Div Comm North 9/4 Bat II to Government Secretary (GS) 7 December 1954 containing 27 October petition by (Dikgosi) E.P. Moremi, Bathoen II, Rasebolai Kgamane, Gaborone and Tiego Tawana w/ follow up correspondence.

9. BNA Div Comm South 6/6; also, OP 5/11 I-II; S 391/1.

10. BNA JAC 7th session, April 1958, 87.

11. BNA S 8/3 MacGregor to HC, 20 March 1923.

12. U.S.A. National Archives, Washington D.C., RG 59 General Records of the State Department- Chronological file G. Mennon Williams 1961-66: Telegram 21 August 1961 Williams to Secretary of State.

13. BNA S 23/6/2 (also in DC Molepolole 5/20/1) RC to HC, 6 December 1929.

14. L. Barnes *The New Boer War* London: Hogarth Press 1932, 170.

15. Q.N. Parsons "Shots for a Black Republic? Simon Ratshosa and Botswana Nationalism" *African Affairs*, no. 73 1974, pp. 449-58. BNA S 598/2; S 353/14; S 43/7 contain Ratshosa manuscript and other correspondence.

16. BNA Native Advisory Council (NAC) minutes of 1rst session, November 1920.

17. BNA BNB 242 NAC minutes of 11th session, May 1931.

18. BNA RC 6/4 RC to HC, 7 November 1901.

19. "Introduction", in Morton & Ramsay *Birth of Botswana*, 4-5.

20. BNA S 25/3 "Hut Tax, 1916-28," Financial Secretary to Acting GS, 17 July 1916.

21. David Ivon Jones "Communism in South Africa" report presented to the Executive of the Third International on behalf of the International Socialist League of South Africa, published as document 19 in *South African Communists Speak 1915-1980* London: Inkululeko Publications 1981, 41-57.

22. "Resolution on the 'South African Question' adopted by the Executive Committee of the Communist International following the Sixth Comintern Congress" published as document 42 in *South African Communists* Speak, 91-97.

23. BNA S 156/11, on attempts to suppress communist literature.

24. *Usembenzi/South African Worker* 30 July 1926; see also 27 August 1926; 3 September 1926; 23 September 1933; 7 October 1933; 3 February 1934; 2 June 1934; 4 August 1934; 5 May 1935; 2 January 1937; 19 September 1938.

25. BNA S 493/12; S 242/1-2; DC Serowe 12/21; DC Serowe 15/7. Diana Wylie *A Little God, the Twilight of Patriarchy in a Southern African Kingdom*, Johannesburg: Witwatersrand Press 1990, 77-80. Ballinger toured with Margaret Hodgson and Leonard Barnes, resulting in publications: W. Ballinger & M. Hodgson Britain in Africa no. 2, *The Bechuanaland Protectorate* Alice: Lovedale 1932, and Barns's New Boer War.

26. BNA DC Serowe 15/9 Petition by Bangwato Headmen to H.C., 30 July 1931.

27. BNA S 5/1 Magistrate Gobabis to Resident Magistrate (RM) Ghanzi, 19 August 1922.

28. BNA S 5/1 RM Ghanzi to GS, 1 September 1922.

29. BNA S 5/1 RM Ghanzi to GS, 4 April 1923.

30. BNA S 5/1 RM Maun to Acting G.S, 28 December 1922.

31. References in BNA Div. Comm North 9/3-8, 2/7-13, and S 536/1-5: Tergos (Territories Gossip) Reports (1952-61), NDIC & DIR (1953-61). See also H. Robertson's *"From Protectorate to Republic: The Political History of Botswana 1926-1966"* (unpublished 1979 Dalhousie University PhD. dissertation), chapter 6.

32. J. Ramsay *"The Rise and Fall of the Bakwena Dynasty of South-Central Botswana, 1820-1940"* (unpublished 1991 Boston University PhD. dissertation), 394-406. Also J. Ramsay's "The Neo Traditionalist: Sebele II of Bakwena", in *Birth of Botswana*, 30-44 and Titus Mbuya "Legitimacy and Succession in Chieftainship: The Case of the Bakwena, 1930-63" (unpublished 1984 University of Botswana [UB] BA thesis).

33. BNA High Court C/8/725 for case record & judgment, including references to Sebele II. The link between the case and Sebele II is further reflected in Tshekedi's correspondence with Sebele II & Bathoen II in BNA Bangwato Tribal Archives 20/1-2.

34. BNA S 433/9, D.C. Molepolole Report, March 24, 1939

35. J. Ramsay "Resistance of Subordinate Groups: Babirwa, Bakgatla bagaMmanaana, and Bakalanga Nswazwi", in Birth of Botswana, 64-81. B. Tselaesele "Bakgatla ba-ga Mmanaana" (unpublished 1978 UB BA thesis); M. Mongwa "The Political Struggles between BakaNswazwi under John Madawu and Bangwato under Tshekedi Khama, 1926-32" (unpublished 1977 UB BA thesis); and Wilie *Little God*, 162-74.

36. F. Morton "Popular Unrest in Kgatleng", in *Birth of Botswana*, 82-91.

37. F. Morton & T. Mbuya "The South", in *Birth of Botswana*, 157-60. Also, BNA OP H 277; SP/N/13.

38. Q.N. Parsons "The Bangwato Political Crisis 1948-1953: another stab at Botswana social history" U.B. Dept. of History Conference on Bangwato Politics under Colonial Rule, November 1984. "The Central District: BaNgwato Crisis 1948-56, in *Birth of Botswana*, 123-33. Q.N. Parsons, W. Henderson & T. Tlou Seretse Khama, 1921-1980, Gaborone: Botswana Society & MacMillan, 1995, chapters 5-6.

39. Moutlakgola Nwako interviewed by B. Morton and J. Ramsay, 16 July 1993. BNA Div. Comm. North 9/4 NDIC September 1953; S 536/4 Tergos 1952-53; S 353/6 Political notes on traditional leaders, L.D. Raditlhadi, 16 September 1960.

40. Oratile's candidacy was also reportedly supported by Kgosi Makgosi of Balete, who was warned by the government to curtail his pro-Seretse views: BNA S 536/4 Tergos August 1952.

41. Div. Comm. North 9/8 Commissioner of Police to Div. Comm. North & South, 14 September 1957.

42. BNA OP SP/N/15 "Future of the Institution of Chieftainship" (Germond Report), July 1956.

43. Div. Comm South 3/17; 6/10. F. Morton & T. Mbuya "The South", in *Birth of Botswana*, 155-57.

44. B. Morton & J. Ramsay *The Making of a President, Sir Ketumile Masire's Early Years,* Gaborone: Pula Publishing 1995, chapter 4.

45. Sir Ketumile Masire interviewed by B. Morton and J. Ramsay, 25 April 1994.

46. A. Murray "The Northwest", in *Birth of Botswana*, 110-122. K. Kebiditswe "Subjugation and Conflict in Ngamiland, the Batawana-Bayie Conflict of 1948" (unpublished 1984 UB BA thesis). BNA OP H 256.

47. BNA OP SP/N/20; H. 176; SF23 N/5/5. Div. Comm South 2/1/1-4; 3/2-3. S. 536/2 Tergos July 1951; S. 178/3; S 443/7; S 534/3; S 341/13; S 300/8; DC Molepolole 6/11-13.

48. Private communication S.G. Masimega to J. Ramsay using a list of Bakwena Tribal Council members in BNA OP SP/N/5.

49. J. Ramsay *"The Rise and Fall of the Bakwena Dynasty",* pp. 409-13.

50. BNA Div. Comm. South 3/17. Eyes Rekoeng, interviewed by J. Ramsay with T. Mbuya 6 May 1987.

51. Correspondence of the Association in BNA S 125/11/1-2; S 539/6

52. BNA S 2/6/, S 463/3; DC GH (Ghanzi) 1/5.

53. BNA Div. Comm. North 9/7 Ghanzi District Tergos, March 1958.

54. BNA Div. Comm. North NDIC/DIR: November-December 1954, which reflects official concern about Northern Rhodesia African National Congress influence.

55. BNA Div. Comm. North 9/3 DIR May 1959, January, September 1960; 9/4 NDIC September 1953.

56. BNA Div. Comm. North 9/4 NDIC May, December 1957; 9/3 DIR September 1959.

57. BNA Div. Comm. North 9/3 DIR January- March 1960, September 1960; Div. Comm. North 9/4 NDIC June 1957.

58. BNA S 178/3 Matante to African Authority Bamangwato, 1 October 1960.